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THE NATURE OF VISITOR EXPERIENCES AT
JUNIPER PRAIRIE WILDERNESS

Dr. Joe Roggenbuck

FINAL REPORT FOR RESEARCH AGREEMENT


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"The Nature of Visitor Experiences at Juniper
Prairie Wilderness"

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The Nature of Visitor Experiences at Juniper Prairie Wilderness

Final Report

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INTRODUCTION

Recreation resource management can be thought of as dealing with the relationship between people and the environment. There are two sides to this question: (1) what impact do people have on the environment and (2) how does the environment influence the nature of human experience. This research project explored the latter issue. Initially the goal of this portion of the project was framed in language implying the purpose of data collection and analysis was to determine whether or not visitors were receiving a wilderness experience at Juniper Prairie. However, wilderness is a state of mind (Nash, 1982) and whether a particular experience constitutes a wilderness experience is a highly subjective judgment. For any given individual experience, there may be several opinions about the extent to which it represented a wilderness experience: the visitor may have one view, the researcher another, and the manager a third. In light of this perspective, the question of whether or not the experiences visitors find at Juniper Prairie constitute a wilderness experience is viewed as being a management decision. As a consequence, the analysis and presentation of data from this portion of the project adopt the more general goal of describing the nature of the experiences visitors find at Juniper Prairie in such a way that managers can begin to make a judgment about the extent to which these experiences represent wilderness experiences. The report has three major sections. The first describes the assumptions about recreation experiences underlying the research strategy used in the study. The second section discusses the methodology employed in the study and the final section presents the analysis and interpretation summarizing the nature of experiences the sample of visitors interviewed received.

UNDERSTANDING THE NATURE OF EXPERIENCE

The most prevalent approach to understanding recreation in resource management has been a motivational research program that defines recreation as an intrinsically rewarding experience (Driver

and Tocher, 1970; Driver et al. 1987). However, rather than looking directly at the nature of the experience, this approach defines recreational engagements in terms of "a package of specific psychological outcomes which are realized from a recreation engagement" (Manfredo et al., 1983:264). Thus, this approach looks at expectations, goals, desired outcomes, motivations, and cognitive judgments about outcomes actually received (Mannell and Iso-Ahola, 1987; Williams, 1989). As a result, the focus of this approach has been on satisfaction with the experience defined in terms of the degree to which desired and expected outcomes are realized (Brown, 1989; Williams, 1989) rather than on the actual nature of the experience. This focus, though often useful, also has limitations. First, for example, while the motivational approach may tell us that people visit parks to enjoy nature, this approach does not explore what it means to "enjoy nature" (i.e., the content of what is enjoyed, the process through which people attend to and perceive nature, or the emotional responses). Second, in many cases, especially for first time users, expectations are often vague or nonexistent (Arnould and Price, 1993). Third, experiences often have an emergent quality. That is, experiences may differ from expectations and the most memorable or enjoyable aspect of the experience may, in fact, be the unexpected (Arnould and Price, 1993; Scherl, 1988; Rolston 1987). And finally, a person with inappropriate expectations may have a wilderness experience (at least in the eyes of researchers or managers) but be very dissatisfied or unhappy with it.

As a result of the concerns listed above, this project adopted two research strategies that attempted to look more directly at the nature of visitors' experiences in Juniper Prairie. The first approach, described in the accompanying report, describes the nature of experience by capturing the content and focus of attention at various moments during the course of the trip. This approach reflects a concern that memory decay or recall bias is the most serious threat to the validity of research exploring recreation experiences, and reflects the assumption that the nature of experience is best understood by exploring it as it unfolds.

Rather than documenting attention as the trip unfolds, the second research approach, presented in this report, focuses on the meaning of the experience; that is, how the experience is constructed and remembered (in this case at its immediate conclusion - the take out point). This second approach reflects two major assumptions. The first assumption is that experience is best understood as a whole rather than as the sum of its parts. This statement should not be interpreted as a criticism of, or conflict with, the research strategy adopted in the companion paper. Rather, the two research strategies adopted in this study are most appropriately thought of as viewing the nature of experience from different perspectives. The approach adopted in this phase of the research emphasizes the concept of "meaning" as a basis for understanding experience rather than the concept of "focus of attention" which is the basis for the first research strategy.

The second major assumption underlying this phase of the study reflects the belief that the specific nature of recreation experiences in natural environments is best characterized or described by the concept of situated freedom. Situated freedom is the idea that there is structure in the environment that sets boundaries on what can be perceived or experienced, but that within those boundaries recreationists are free to experience the world in highly individual, unique, and variable ways. Under these conditions, the nature of experience is seen as emergent rather than predictable. This concept is illustrated by the old woman/young woman drawing in Figure 1. In this example there is structure which sets boundaries on what it is reasonable to perceive in the picture. At the same time whether an individual seeing the drawing for the first time perceives the old woman or young woman is not really a predictable phenomenon. Both exist, either may be seen, and the same individual at different times may perceive one or the other. Eventually, individuals will learn to readily see either the old woman or young woman (though not both at the same time) depending on how they look at the drawing, but this reflects the simplicity of the illustration in contrast to the complexities of real world environments.

Under the two assumptions outlined above, the goal of research exploring the nature of experiences can be thought of as one of identifying the boundaries of the environment and the types of experiences that visitors are obtaining within those boundaries. This can be done at various levels of abstraction (specificity). For example at a very broad level one may identify that individuals visiting Juniper Prairie "experience challenge and excitement" or "enjoy nature", both of which, on the surface, seem consistent with a wilderness experience. However, it is easy to imagine how both a visitor canoeing down Juniper Prairie and one taking a water chute log ride at Disney World find challenge and excitement. However, the definition of what challenge and excitement mean and the manner in which these opportunities are related to the setting is likely to differ vastly for the two types of experiences. Similarly, one person can enjoy nature by watching panhandling bears along motorized nature trails while another observes grizzlies as they congregate along rivers in remote areas of Alaska during a salmon run. While both individuals may respond that "enjoying nature" was an important aspect of the experience, the actual nature, meaning, and consequences of the experience are likely to be more appropriately described in vastly different language. As a result, to provide a basis for managers to reach a decision regarding whether visitors are able to find a wilderness experience at Juniper Prairie, greater specificity is need.

Employing traditional survey techniques based on visitor responses to a set of written statements becomes problematic at levels of specificity greater than simply identifying that visitors "enjoyed nature." In part this is because many traditional psychometric measurement techniques used to establish the reliability, validity, and statistical generalizability of responses are partly designed to eliminate specificity or uniqueness in items used to measure responses. Also, the whole idea of representing the possible nature of the experience in some predetermined operational model becomes problematic when one adopts a perspective on human experience consistent with the concept of situated freedom. Therefore, rather than starting with an operational model, the starting point for the

analysis of experience in the research reported here was to obtain recreationists' descriptions of their experience through open-ended interviews.

METHODOLOGY

Interviews

Initially, I approached this task by developing an interview guide (Appendix I) composed of open-ended questions which were intended to lead respondents to discuss themes that were relevant to the research question without directing them to express specific meanings (Kvale, 1983). However, during the course of the interviews, I began to realize the interview process was encouraging people to list the contents of their experiences (closer to measuring recall of how attention was focused) rather than to describe the nature and meaning of the experience. Analysis of the interviews as I was conducting them suggested that the most "successful" (informative, insightful) interviews were those in which the nature of the responses seemed closer to telling a story than to responding to interview questions. Additionally, observation of interactions among groups not interviewed supported this perception.

For example, consider the observations briefly summarizing the experience of the following two groups. The first was a family which arrived at the take out point in two canoes (parents in one and children in a second). They looked tired and unhappy and at first snapped at each other as they landed and disembarked from the canoe. They removed their gear and sat quietly saying very little, seemingly dejected, at first. However, after about 20 minutes they started discussing the experience with what appeared to be an increasing level of enthusiasm and animation. They talked about hearing "gators" calling to each other in the reeds. They talked about how one canoe lost track of the other, about how one group shouted to try and locate the missing canoe. They talked about having to decide whether to wait for the other canoe, whether they had taken the wrong turn, whether the other canoe

would come that way at all, and whether they could find them or not. Meanwhile the other canoe had discovered the cabin near the boundary of the wilderness and had stopped to explore until they saw that it was not open to the public. The shuttle van arrived before they were finished discussing the experience. In a second example, a husband met his wife at the take out point. They had canoed the Run together a month before. This time he had done it with friends, and it had been an entirely different experience. The previous trip had been smooth canoeing. This time the trip had been a real challenge, and that is what the story he told his wife focused on; how he had swamped and lost his glasses (later found) and about the times he had to get out of the canoe and lift it over obstacles simply to keep going. And even though this trip was not what he had expected, it seemed to make a good story, one he seemed to enjoy telling and appeared happy with.

The idea that people make sense of their world through story telling is consistent with "narrative psychology" a branch of psychology that is increasingly gaining attention among researchers seeking to understand the nature and meaning of human experiences. In recognizing this, subsequent interviews attempted to encourage people to tell the story of the experience rather than list the aspects of the experience.

Analysis of Interviews

When observations are collected and represented in the form of narratives or textual data, the task of "mobilizing" and presenting the data is often somewhat more problematic than it is for quantitative data. One way to present the data would simply be to report the original interviews, similar to the discussion of the two observations presented above. However, this would require an extremely lengthy report. In a "raw" form, the 30 interviews conducted for the study require over 160 pages. An analysis and report that lengthy with no other attempt to organize or structure the findings would be overwhelming. The approach adopted in this report is to identify dominant themes

which seem to characterize the nature of visitor experiences at Juniper Prairie and to present the different ways these themes were featured in visitor experiences. Discussion of results is divided into three major sections: Nature of Experiences, Perception of the Setting (as wilderness or not), and Reactions to Social Conditions.

Sampling and Generalizability of Results

Thirty interviews were conducted over a period of 8 days (Table 1). Interviews were conducted at the take out as visitors waited for the shuttle van which returned them to their cars. Interviews were tape recorded and later transcribed. Although an attempt was made to spread out the interviews and to select visitors with a wide range of characteristics, sampling was not random. In particular, because of weather conditions (thunderstorms frequently present later in the afternoon), scheduling of the shuttle vans, and general confusion at the take out toward the end of the day, interviews were limited to visitors arriving at the take out early in the day (12:00 - 15:00). As consequence of the small sample size and the nonrandom sampling, the results presented here are not statistically generalizable. However, the concept of statistical generalizability is not entirely consistent with the assumptions about the nature of recreation experiences guiding this research approach. Statistical generalizability comes at a cost. As specificity (richness of detail, more concrete information, and less abstraction) increases generalizability decreases. For example, at some level of detail everyone's experience is unique. While at the highest level of abstraction, statements that are true of everyone can be made (e.g., during the trip visitors experienced nature). Since the goal of this research was to help managers determine if visitors are getting wilderness experiences at Juniper Prairie, richness of detail was sought at the expense of statistical generalizability.

The concept of situated freedom is also relevant to the discussion of generalizability. Again, situated freedom is the idea that there is structure in the environment that sets boundaries on the

nature of experience but that within those boundaries recreationists are free to experience the world in highly individual, unique, and variable ways. Under this perspective, the experiences collected, analyzed, and presented here may be thought of as representative types. The phrase "representative type" is used here to imply two concepts. First, it refers to the idea that the description of the experiences represent a detailed understanding of actual individuals rather than an aggregate characterization of some nonexistent average individual (cf. Shafer, 1969). Second, it is used to emphasize the idea that the data "represent" a possible type of experience in relation to the context of the setting rather a statistically generalizable, law-like result. In other words, the results describe types of experiences that visitors are receiving at Juniper Prairie. However it is not appropriate to draw conclusions about the extent to which these types of experiences are distributed across the population of visitors to Juniper Prairie nor to assume that all possible types of experiences have been captured in the interviews.

RESULTS

Nature of Experiences

Challenge. The most prevalent theme in the interviews was the experience of challenge on the trip down the Run. This experiential theme was evident in all the interviews, although in five interviews the meaning or role of challenge in defining the nature of the experience was not clear. In the remainder of the interviews though, the role challenge played in defining the experience was classified into fairly distinct categories (Table 2). The organization of Table 2 is intended to represent the strength or degree to which the theme of challenge seemed to dominate the experience, with intensity or importance seeming to decrease as one moves from left to right. At the extreme left, the theme of challenge seemed to define the meaning of the experience in the respondents' minds at the time of the interview. However, for the first grouping of respondents in this primary category

(including members from three different groups), the challenge encountered did not lead to positive experiences. Consider the following excerpts:

"About killed my back..... It will be a cold day before I come back. We lost a pair of shoes and nearly got pushed in the muck over our heads." (female, interview 72302¹, 39-44).

[Visibly unhappy] "The first half of the river is really, the branches and the trees, something has to be done about that. But the second part of it is fine, it's really, it's ok." (70-74) It's just the overgrowth at the beginning. It's just, I think it's pretty bad. I don't think you think it was bad [referring to one of 3 companions], but it's I don't know what you could possibly do about that, probably would have to send somebody down there cutting all day, but it'd be worth it." (male, interview 80905, 198-205)

The three visitors expressing this attitude were all members of parties who participated in the interview as a group. One similarity among these respondents is that they did not actively participate through most of the interview, entering the conversation only long enough to express negative opinions. For example, the remaining respondent for which an excerpt was not presented offered her opinion only at the end of the interview when I asked if there were any comments they would like to add. She began:

"Let me just make a comment. I didn't sign up for the tickets, I didn't go up to the window, I didn't get any information. We're here because Joe suggested it to us." (female, interview 72102, 195-198)

Unfortunately the cassette reached the end of the tape just as she began to speak. However, the gist of her comments (recorded immediately after the interview) were that she had to duck and bend and squat, that no one had told her what to expect, and that she felt she should have been given some kind of warning about the conditions she encountered. In all three cases, other members of the group had a more positive evaluation of the experience. However, in group 80905 (4 people) there was some evidence that the unpleasant experience of the one individual (who wouldn't "touch" the question about the meaning of the experience) spoiled or at least detracted from the others' experiences. For example, two of his companions had been down the Run before. When asked about this trip in

¹The interview number represents month/day/interview number on that day.

comparison to the other one, which they thought had been better, one responded "I guess it all depends on the people you are with" (177).

In the second grouping of respondents for whom challenge seemed to define the experience, the meaning was a much more positive one (Table 2). For these individuals, the challenge seemed to produce a sense of accomplishment, of overcoming or surviving a significant trial. The first two respondents in this category were quite similar in that they seemed to actively be debating in their minds whether the experience was, in fact, a positive one. For example, at the halfway point, one woman:

"was hoping that there would be an option to get out and have someone pick you up there..... because you can start off thinking 7 miles is nothing, and then it seems very long." (female, interview 72103, 14)

However, when asked the meaning of the experience, she responded:

"Well personally today it's just that I survived it and managed to go. Because truly if there had been a half way point where I could have gotten out, then that's what I would have done. You know, just the idea of successfully completing it." (79-81)

The second respondent in this category was quite similar. When asked if anything detracted from the experience the response was:

"Just the difficulty of it. It was pretty harrowing. We got stuck in one spot. I let them off [referring to his two children]. I was going to lift the boat over and I slipped because it was a fresh tree that was down. It was all kind of mossy and what not. And it took me about 45 minutes to get the boat right side up, the water out, and pulled up on the side and bring it around the tree. These guys were pretty scared, but I guess that was part of the experience." (male, interview 72202, 56-64).

However, when asked about whether anything stood out in his mind as adding to the experience, his immediate and sole response was "the challenge" (77). Additionally, he seemed further along in trying to decide whether the experience was a positive one. He seemed to feel it made a good story even as it ended; he began enthusiastically telling me about the trip even before I had introduced myself.

A third respondent in this category found a similar meaning in the experience. For example,

much of the interview focused on the skill and challenge it had taken to canoe the run and when asked the meaning of the experience his response was:

"Well, it was a challenge that I wanted to do on my own and accomplishing it means a lot. It's an achievement if you will." (male, interview 80603, 152-154)

However, unlike the previous two respondents, he did not seem to be mentally debating the appropriate evaluation of the experience or the positive contribution of challenge. In part this seemed to be because he had expected a challenge whereas the other respondents (one who been there before when experienced companions had done the paddling and one who had heard about it from a friend who "didn't give me any idea what it was all about") had not anticipated the degree of challenge. Interestingly, the former respondent (80603) did seek reinforcement or verification that this was a challenging run: "From your perspective, is this a tough run, an easy run, or "

These three respondents shared two other similarities beyond the interpretation of the meaning of the experience. First, they were all novice canoers (one had been down the Run before, but with others doing the paddling). Second the aesthetic qualities of the place were not a major aspect of the interviews, suggesting, perhaps, that coping with the challenge had dominated the focus of attention ("No I didn't see much anything else. Not that I expected to, you're spending most of your time watching the water (male, interview 80603)). Of the three, the one who did mention the aesthetic qualities the most was the one who had been down before and it was not clear whether the references were to this trip or the previous one.

The final respondent in this grouping, though similar in some ways (a novice who found the experience a challenge), also differed slightly. First she was a member of a large Sierra Club excursion in which the interview with the entire group focused a great deal on the aesthetic qualities of the place. Second, the meaning and challenge were linked to a deeper life experience. When asked the meaning of the experience, she responded:

"It meant a lot to me because I was in a very bad car accident in 1992 and this was my thing.

I had to do this and I'm delighted." (female, interview 72304, 252-254)

The second primary category concerning the role or meaning of challenge to the experience consisted of visitors for whom the challenge seemed to contribute to the construction of a good story (Table 2). The first grouping within this category was of individuals who initially suggested that the overhanging trees and submerged snags were a negative, and usually suggested that something needed to be done. However their subsequent discussion indicated that this aspect of the Run in part made the experience what it was and provided a memorable story from the experience. The stories related by these respondents ranged from creative ducking, bending, and maneuvering of one's body within the canoe to actually tipping over as illustrated by the following two excerpts.

M: "I just, I wondered. I've seen where they have cut some trees away and I just wonder if they couldn't get back out there. Some of them were really low. Almost impossible." G1: "Almost like doing the limbo in a canoe.... But some of it was fun though. I mean I like, I'd leave some of it in. But some were really rough." G2: "The ones that we went under, that last really, really low one. It had a branch hanging down like right in front of it and it was lower than the bridge. It was like, I don't know, wasn't that far off [hand gesture showing how far]." M: "We all sat in the bottom of the canoe and got below the gunnels. I mean we were as low as we could get." G1: "I mean we barely made it through." (male, two girls, interview 72101, 118-138)

I: "... was there anything in particular that detracted from your enjoyment of the trip." M: "Other than dumping out of the canoe?" W: [Laugh]. "No." M: "No it was fine." W: "Everything's wet. But it was good." I: "Anything in particular that added to the experience maybe?" W: "Falling in the water, yeah. That, that -" M: "That worked both ways." W: "And it was in a good, nice sandy spot and we could both touch, so we got the boat back over. But, looking at the boat and seeing it full of water was like, wow, what do you do now?" W: "When I went in that's what I thought [she would lose her glasses]. Though I held on to them." M: "Found out your paddles float." W: "They did? Yeah, they did [laugh]. I was too panicky - I'm in the water!" (male, female, interview 80604, 150-178)

The second grouping within the "good story" category also emphasized capsizing and the challenge. In some cases these visitors capsized themselves, while in other cases they described observing others tip over. In the latter case, the possibility of tipping over themselves was definitely on their mind. The primary difference for this group was that they seemed to have already decided that the overhangs and potential for swamping were a positive aspect of the experience whereas the

previous group seemed to still be debating the issue in their minds. For example, when discussing what made the experience and place distinctive one respondent who had not capsized said:

"I have been canoeing on the eastern shore of Maryland ... I guess it's a lot wider, the river is a lot wider there. It just takes a lot more skill [here], which we didn't have... it was just real challenging. A few times we said, I don't know if we're going to do it, but I don't think it was a negative... For me there was a bigger fear of going in than in other places." (male, interview 80702, 47-58)

While another who had capsized stated:

W: "It looks natural, it doesn't look too made up for the public I don't think. Because they keep extra overhangs for, you know, the more natural kind of look." I: "So you're happy with the overhangs?" W: "Yeah, I think so because otherwise it would be too boring. It would be like some sort of Disneyland ride that you can't hurt yourself in anyway whatsoever. No hazard zones. It makes it more fun and exciting if there is more blockage somehow." (female, interview 80703, 163-169)

The third grouping within the good story category was comprised of individuals for whom the challenge definitely led to a positive story. While one of these respondents had tipped in, there was, in general, less emphasis on tipping in than in the previous grouping. The following excerpts seemed representative of these respondents' comments.

I: "A lot of folks find this a little bit challenging to them" W: [Laugh] "All the ones [overhangs] that you have to duck and stuff, there's a lot of ducking." M: "For beginners, it's not good for beginners." W: "There is a lot of ducking and stuff, but that makes it all the more fun I think If it was straight through, it wouldn't be the same." (female, male, interview 80605, 93-102).

M1: "Well it's totally different from Virginia because ... in Virginia we had the more rapid moving water, you know, and fighting going down the rocks and going over little ledges and stuff like that where you don't have that in here. But here you're ducking trees and trying to make it around corners with tight turns..." I: "How was the ducking under trees, was that a problem? Did that detract from the experience?" M1: "Oh no. I don't even care about that, it's just fun.... Some of the places you go in are just pretty tight, you know, but who cares? You know, you didn't expect to be going down a main highway [laugh]." (male, interview 80804, 62-74)

The final grouping within the good story category consisted of two interviews in which the respondents emphasized the opportunity Juniper Run provided for developing, using, and demonstrating their skill as canoeists.

M1: "... you have to learn how to read the current, like a downward V, and you have to learn the currents of the water." I: "Was that a good part of the experience or bad?" M1: "Learning? No, I liked it." M2: "I liked it, like a little adventure." M1: "I was anchor man on the bow." M2: "That's why I liked it a little bit. I mean it is, some of the ??? are all right, they're hard to get through. Just some of them are virtually impossible. We almost got tipped over and everything." (2 males, interview 72201, 63-73)

I: "Is there anything about this particular river that you think makes it stand out, distinctive from the others?" W: "It's more tight." M: "What I like about it is it's more instinctive, yeah, I like -" W: "You've got to have more skill to maneuver it." M: "Yes, it's definitely, you need some skill which makes it different from the other rivers. I mean above average skill to maneuver it properly." (female, male, interview 80601, 104-110)

The primary difference between this group and the "sense of accomplishment" grouping in the primary category "theme defined the meaning of the experience" (Table 2) was that this group found the Run provided an opportunity to express an identity as experienced canoers and to display skills. They never doubted their ability to successfully complete the trip, whereas the previous group were novices and were, at times, uncertain of their ability to successfully complete the trip.

The third primary category with respect to the role of challenge in experiences at Juniper Run referred to interviews for which the theme was seen as a defining characteristic of the trip. There were two fairly distinct groupings within this category. The first included respondents with previous experience at the site who showed a strong attachment to place. The challenge of the Run contributed to that attachment.

M: "Definitely as far as being able to canoe, this is about the best around. Because you can go to Alexander, you know, and that's basically a river. It's big and ??? all the way down so if you want to get back into nature you're, here, in tight quarters. It's about the best place around." I: "So what makes this different from a river you're saying is it's -" M: "Oh yeah, it's like a big creek. I mean if you want to canoe this is the best place to go." (male, interview 72201, 82-90)

I: "And why is it maybe your favorite over Alexander?" W: "Alexander is a wide stream of water, it's a wonderful spring and it's just a wide area. And lots of sunshine. I like the challenge, I like the crooked way and the, I like the challenge of these little meandering streams that we have coming out of Juniper. It's just my favorite. Probably my favorite in all of Florida." (female, interview 72304, 203-209)

For these two individuals, the specific conditions of the day (e.g., the first respondent's assessment that today's trip had posed a higher than normal challenge) were less significant because they seemed to think in terms of an enduring involvement with the place rather than in terms of a single outing or experience.

For the second grouping within this primary category, the theme of challenge was raised as a definitive aspect of the experience, but respondents seemed somewhat ambivalent about it.

".... just moving around the logs and everything, that was all right. It got to be a pain every once in a while, but outside of that it was all right." (male, interview 72301, 78-79)

I: "Did that make it, are the trees making it more difficult to come down than it use to be?"

M: "It use to be more a relaxing ride [laugh]. You know, you've got to duck a lot." I: "Has that taken away from the experience?" M: "No, no it's just got, you can't relax as much. You've got to keep your eyes forward. So it's just a different experience I would say. But any canoe longer than that [3 seater] I think would have a hard time." (male, interview 80803, 50-57)

Thus, like other respondents, they recognized the challenge as a distinctive characteristic of this place, but generally it seemed as if they had not yet decided whether the challenge was a positive or negative aspect of the experience. For four of the respondents in this grouping who had canoed the Run previously (72203, 80602, 80803, and 80901) this was in part because the trip this time had been more difficult, more of a struggle than they remembered from previous visits. In fact, because of the potential influence of specific setting conditions on the nature of the experiences described in this report, it is worth noting that overall, ten respondents (including participants of the following interviews: 72201, 72202, 72203, 72302 (2 participants), 72303, 80602, 80803, 80901, and 80905) indicated that conditions were more difficult than previously recalled due to higher water and more downfall than on previous trips. However, in two of these interviews (72303, 80905) another member of the group disagreed with the assessment that the trip had been more difficult this time.

The final primary category in Table 2 contains a miscellaneous grouping of responses in which the theme of challenge was raised. However, for various reasons the role challenge played in

defining the meaning of the experience was not clear. In two cases (80606, 80701) this seemed to be because the respondents seemed "suspicious of" or uncertain about the objective of the interview and therefore the interview was not able to get beyond the "public self" to the personal meaning of the experience. For example, the respondent in interview 80606 seemed suspicious, perhaps because he was an adult leader with a scout troop that had just arrived and were engaging in a playful brawl/mud fight in the water near the take out. As another example of situations in which interviews were placed in the miscellaneous category, in three interviews in this grouping (80801, 81001, 80903) the responses were somewhat contradictory. The run was described as an easy one, but to varying degrees the challenge of it was also pointed out (overhangs were a nuisance; it was not a big deal but they got caught in the brush and were sore after the work out; it was pretty "straight forward ... [but] there were some places along the river where you weren't sure which way to go").

Stories of Nature. The second experiential dimension relevant to the question of whether or not visitors are getting a wilderness experience at Juniper Prairie deals with the opportunity the experience provides for visitors to focus on and enjoy nature. Although this dimension was prevalent throughout the interviews, compared to the other dimensions of the experience discussed in this report, it was more difficult to draw out in a consistent fashion during the interview process, more difficult to interpret, and more difficult to present in terms of a coherent pattern. This difficulty is due to a variety of factors. First, this aspect of the experience was more variable than the challenge dimension with respect to both the variability in environmental conditions and the degree to which it was determined by the environment. For example, the contribution of the environment to determining the role and meaning of challenge to the experience - the over hanging limbs, the blow downs, the snags, the tight, windy course of the Run - was fairly constant for all canoeists, varying only to a small degree when visitors had a choice of different routes. In contrast, at least with respect to the wildlife component of this dimension, the contribution of the environment was more variable -

for some visitors the alligators, otters, and owls were there to be seen, but for other visitors they were not. With respect to the second issue, environmental determinism, the challenge of the Run was something of a "universal" theme. While there was individual variation in how intense the challenge was and the role it played in the experience, in a sense, the environment forced this dimension of the experience on visitors whether they were receptive to it or not. In contrast, there was greater freedom to attend to or not attend to the natural features of the area. For example, one respondent for whom the natural beauty (and in fact the entire trip) seemed no big deal ("Everything seemed like, you know, it was a regular canoe trip, you know, nothing outstanding but a regular canoe trip, for me it was (male, interview 72301, 74-76)) was primarily there to be with friends and family rather to enjoy the setting.

I: "How did you decide on coming to Juniper Prairie?" M: "Um, some family members came in and that's what they were talking about doing. And everybody really got together last night and decided to come out here this morning....." I: "And if you could sort of describe the meaning of this trip" M: "Well, just coming down and being with the family you know, just being together really at some place."

A final reason the nature appreciation dimension was more difficult to address and summarize was raised in the discussion of interview methodology. Initially the interview format seemed to encourage individuals to "list" the contents of their experience while subsequent observations and ongoing analysis of interviews suggested visitors remembered, made sense of, and recounted their experiences more naturally in the form of stories. The "listing" response, then, seems closer to studying focus of attention rather than the meaning of the experience, and the research approach adopted in the companion paper is probably a better strategy for exploring this issue.

As a consequence of the issues discussed above, discussion of this experiential dimension focuses more on presentation of specific stories than on an attempt to develop an organizing system for categorizing the type, nature, intensity, or distribution of stories within the sample of respondents. The most common type of nature story told dealt with interactions with wildlife.

I: "Anything in particular that stands out in your mind that perhaps really increased your enjoyment of this place?" G1: "Alligators." G2: "Yeah." I: "Had you expected to see them before?" G1: "Well we knew they were there but we didn't think we'd see them." I: [To adult]. "Had you seen them before when you were on the river?" M1: "Yeah, I had seen them before. We probably heard 10 or 15 back in the weeds that we couldn't see. We actually saw three swimming." (2 girls, male, interview 72101, 141-149)

I: "Could you, you already started telling me a little about the trip, about the gators and stuff [before the tape recorder was turned on]?" W1: "We saw one." I: "Could you describe what it was like, what you saw?" G: "We saw turtles, it was tanning like the alligator." W1: "It was 12 foot long." I: "Twelve foot long, that's a pretty big one. Most people I think are only seeing 4 foot long ones." W1: "Oh no, this was a big one." B: "Like he just ate or something." (female, girl, boy, interview 72303, 18-26)

W3: "Well I tell you one thing, we saw one hell of a nice big gator and ... I saw one little one in the water and that was pretty good.... And we heard one loud one, one big one. And that's just all I wanted to do, just hear them vaguely. Did you see that big one?" W1: "Yeah, I saw the big one." W3: "And then I saw a smaller one about this big [hand gesture]." (2 females, interview 72304, 21-27)

W1: "Heidi and I have been here when the weather was like 28 degrees." W2: "28 degrees." W1: "And the steam was rising off Juniper Run." W2: "And it was fun." W1: "And there were not many people on the river that day. And the birds [laugh]." W2: "And the birds. Would you believe an Anhinga sitting there and boom, bombs away on me. And I say, 'Why you doing that?' And I talked to a curator at the museum. And he says they are very territorial, they don't want you here [laugh]." (2 females, interview 72304, 156-166)

I: "Ok, and y'all were mentioning to this other guy I think that you saw a big gator?" M: "Yeah, a big gator." W: "Oh yeah, the thing just sat there like he owned the world. It was beautiful, but dangerous. Other than that it was a deer, and that was it, a deer." I: "A deer?" W: "She just stood there and watched us like we were invading her privacy here." (male, female, interview 80602, 36-42)

W: "We saw a deer." M: "It was kind of a surprise that it wasn't afraid. It walked right toward us. W: "And an owl." I: "An owl? Oh you are the first person who mentioned an owl. Do you know what kind of an owl it was?" W: "No, a big owl [laugh]." (male, female, interview 80604, 24-32)

"We watched some wildlife. There was some wildlife today too. ... I can't name the birds, but there was a big beautiful gray bird with a white neck, long beak. There was plenty of fish and there was an otter swimming out there... So that was really a treat, I've never seen an otter out there." (male, interview 80606, 61-67)

M: "I thought seeing the alligators was pretty neat." W: "Yeah, they need to bring more gators in." M: "I'd have been disappointed if I hadn't seen one. Actually it swam right under our bow. I thought that was pretty neat.... he looked 4 or 5 feet. Man we saw one that looked bigger a couple of minutes after that, but yeah, he was right under it." W: "About what, 8 feet from the boat?" M: "He acted a little belligerent. He didn't act afraid of

us at all. He kind of came out to check it out. But the other one, that was neat, he went right under the boat.... I got to admit it did put ..." W: "It made him nervous [pointing to child]." M: "The one on the bank as we came by, you know, he came out towards us and stopped." W: "He didn't respect us too much." M: "Oh yeah, he was real close. Yeah, the one he was, these two didn't even see it, I did, went right under the boat." W: "Yeah, I didn't see him." M: "And popped up on the other side. And yeah, I mean I wasn't nervous about it, but yeah, it does catch your attention. Want to make sure you don't flip at that point." (male, female, interview 80801, 121-145)

M: "Oh, well, we saw one large gator. That was - we saw a few birds, a lot of turtles." I: "Do you remember how large the gator was?" M: "Six feet. Chris, what was the size of the gator?" ... B: "Oh, 9 foot." M: "Really, that big? I don't know if it was that big [laugh]." B: "No probably about 8." M: "No, maybe about [gesture]." I: "It looks bigger -" M: "Yeah, as you tell it." B: "No, it was as big as you [interviewer] but a little bigger." M: "Around 6 feet." (male, boy, interview 80803, 17-32)

M1: "And we saw different kinds of wildlife out there that we didn't expect to see from a 10 foot gator down to one about a foot long. And we saw different kinds of birds and we saw a deer and it was a good experience in that respect." I: "Ok, how was seeing, some folks are a little bit nervous about seeing the 10 foot gator..." M1: "Well it wasn't too bad as long as he was far away, but if we had been in one of the more enclosed areas and he'd have been too close to us I'd have been a little shook." I: "Ok, whereabouts did you see him?..." M1: "It was back there just when you come into the grassy area, right along at the beginning of that. And he was just laying there sunning himself." M2: "And we didn't even make him blink." M1: "Big ole thing. He didn't even move." (2 males, interview 80804, 17-28)

"But my most memorable thing was that deer right on, was not that afraid of us, and was right on the edge of the water and that was great. A snowy egret flew right over our head [gestured with hand over head and ducked]. You know it was wildlife for me. That was my biggest thing. I wanted to see life and we got to see big life." (male, interview 80804, 32-36)

M: "The deer, the gator, and the wild turkey." I: "Y'all saw a wild turkey?" M: "The female, yes." W: "A female, right along the water, yeah. The birds are real tame too. It was interesting, you can get right up next to them. No that was a neat. I loved it, loved it, yeah." (male, female, interview 80902, 16-24)

I: "Did y'all see any wildlife on the way down?" W: "Yeah, we saw some otters." M1: "No gators this time. We saw a deer." W: "A deer." M1: "Which had horns on it." I: "Ok. And otters you were saying?" W: "Yeah, we saw a couple of them." I: "Did you get to see them very long?" W: "Yeah, they stuck their head out of the water." M1: "We saw a couple of different groups, but we thought it was just the same ones following us." W: [Laughter]. M1: "It was all right, it was pretty good." (female, male, interview 80905, 100-113)

M2: "Saw a little wildlife today." I: "What'd you see?" M2: "Those big green turtles, we saw 4 of those." B: "Five." M1: "Six." B: "Sea turtles." M1: "I don't know what's the big ones?" M2: "The big green ones?" D: "Those soft shells get that big. The hard shell snapping turtles too." M2: "No, we saw a snapper that was about like that big [gesture]. He

was huge. That was right at that dock." M1: "Lot of fish, lot of fish." M2: "Lot of those big white birds." M1: "Yeah, what are those?" D: "White ibis. The big ones are this, the little ones are snowy egrets." B: "Saw some eagles." M2: "I don't think y'all saw that brown bird. He was sitting right beside of us." B: "He was hiding on a branch." M1: "Yeah on the right?" M2: "Did you see him ??? where it was?" M1: "Yeah, I saw him." M2: "Saw a hawk, did you see that hawk ??? up there?" M1: "No." M2: "He was flying overhead just a while ago." (2 males, boy, van driver, interview 1001, 12-39)

M2: "You can hear every little click in the forest. Remember those clicks we heard back there? And we kept saying 'I wonder if that's an alligator back there stomping around.'" B: "Oh yeah." (male, boy, interview 1001, 147-149)

W: "Heard some woodpeckers, saw a ????" M: "Yeah, and we saw an owl." W: "An owl at first, and that was -" M: "And a few things like that. My sister's been down here a few times and she said she's seen deer swim across. You know she's really seen some unusual things." W: "I think if you went out in the evening or at a time when there were few people on the river you would see more than we saw." (female, male, interview 1002, 45-51)

These excerpts indicate some of the types of wildlife stories visitors leave Juniper Prairie with.

Stories include not only what was seen but also what was heard but not seen (72101, 1001, 1002 above and portions of interviews 72303 and 80601 which are not presented).

Stories of nature recounted by respondents were not limited only to wildlife, other natural aspects of the experience were highlighted as well. For example, many noted details of the lighting and water.

I: "If you were going to describe this place ... how would you describe it ...?" G1: "An adventure." G2: "With really long trails. And shady. With different scenes. Not all the same thing. And, oh, it was very pretty. Especially in the morning. When we first started out it was gorgeous.".... G2: "The sun is just coming up just a little and it's shining through all the trees." G1: "And it makes things like rays in all the places. And the water changes different colors." M: "It was really, the spectrums were really light. Lots of color, the mist on the water with the sunlight. It was really - that was earlier this morning. Right when we started. It was real impressive you know, just really neat." (2 girls, male, interview 72101, 60-67)

"It was after a storm, you know how the sedatives of the leaves and the fallen stuff in there, it made it brown. The last time I was here it was like the whole river was clear. And you could get out and see what was below you. But this time it was the tea color." (male, interview 72201, 18-32)

W: "What's different for us also is the whole aroma in the air because that's very much different -" M: "It's called a stench [laugh]." W: "Well before in the Spring time we were here and I remembered it as being a real pungent, sweet aroma and now I don't notice so

much like the flowers because there aren't that many probably in bloom -" M: "Well the soils then, the first coloration we saw was red and we don't know what the red soil was, but then I suppose that all of the yellow soil actually is sulphur and that's what produces the sulphur odor and taste to the water [laugh]. So now we know. I don't think we figured that out 10 years ago, as I remember. If we're right." (female, male, interview 80901)

I: "Anything else stand out in your mind about the trip down?" M: "Just the way, in the beginning where the water comes up out of the ground, the springs themselves I think are impressive. We're from south Florida and we don't have anything like that down there that I'm aware of. Most of it's all up at this end of the state. That's impressive I think, that part of it. Just seeing how, you know, I read in, I think it was up at Salt Springs yesterday, how the sink holes is where all the water ... goes down, and we were over at the sink hole in Gainesville yesterday also. And kind of interesting just to follow through how the water goes down and then comes back up and then flows into the big lakes." (male, interview 80903, 39-45)

M: "Well the fact that, for me, the fact that it's a natural spring and the water's very clear, I think makes it kind of unique. I guess that's not so unusual for this area." W: "No, it's different from Itchatucknee because that's really totally clean all the way down and this is clear and then the tannin -" M: "The tannin gets in the water." W: "the water." M: "And discolors it a little bit." W: "So it's, it's a little different, unique that way in terms of the Itchatucknee." (male, female, interview 1002, 89-95)

Stories centered around the vegetation in the area were also evident in interviews.

"I actually remarked to them, I was saying to them, it reminded me of going down the African Queen somewhat. It was just lush. It's my vision of what the Everglades or something like that would look like in a tropical or semitropical, or temperate climate. And I have never really spent anytime other than Disneyland that was anything even close to that. So I thought it was - in the beginning this was a fantastic lot of beauty. I mean the Spanish moss, the ferns, the banana plants, the things you don't see if you're from up north especially. So - and the wildflowers." (male, interview 72102, 18-32)

W?: "White azalea is blooming." W1: "And Joe-pye weeds. Oh, there's fragrant orchids in the trees. One whole branch is - have you been down the run?" ... W1: "Well you better go down while you can see the cardinal flower out in the swamp." W1: "Why is azalea blooming so late? It's a white azalea, totally white. When I was on the pan-handle, we did a canoe trip up there near the Florida caverns. We had flame azalea and that was beautiful. And down here it is toward the end of July and there's azalea blooming." W3: "I saw some honeysuckle and some jasmine, different patches." I: "Does somebody have to be really looking for it to see it down here?" W1: "If you are a wildlife person -" W2: "If you want to see it, you will see it." ... W1: "Ok, I'll tell you, marsh mallows." W3: "The mallows, that's right the mallows were out." W1: "The mallows. The hyacinth doesn't count because she's an exotic. I'm also a member of the Native Plant Society." (3 females, interview 72304, 268-288)

W: "I remember when we were here 10 years ago I remembered it as like a jungle, like a tropical experience with the forest really closed in on you and it didn't disappoint me, it's the

same, you know, as I remembered it." M: "As you said, the semi-tropical. I mean I describe this place to people as the closest I'll ever get to a jungle. It could be canoeing through what I imagine a jungle to look like. And the palmetto looked nice. There were some really large trees, some very big trees. Well, you know, I guess it surprised, I don't know what kind of trees they are, but they have a very large diameter trunk, roots actually, and then the trunk itself isn't all that big." (female, male, interview 80901, 44-50)

M: "And there is all the combination of the palms, you know, and some of the other hardwood trees that made it real interesting, different from -" W: "Where they grew over the water was -" M: "Being from Texas, you know, I'm not use to palms and some of the tropical things that you see along this river. So that's an interesting combination of outdoor effect there. And then of course at the end when we were going through the marshes, that was kind of interesting. That was definitely different from the first, you know, part of the trip where it's so dense and overgrown. It was generally a very pleasant experience. I'd do it again ..., maybe not today [laugh]." (male, female, interview 81002, 96-102)

The excerpts presented above begin to suggest the intensity and memorability of the "nature story dimension" of the experience. As some of the excerpts above show, the stories told about the place are not limited to experiences of the present. Visitors with a history at the site remember the best nature stories from the past and apparently enjoy reliving and retelling them as part of the current experience. Also, exchanging stories with companions and with other groups at the take out often was a part of the final stage of the on-site experience. For example, the male from interview 80602 had already related some of his experiences to another group prior to my interviewing him. The couple from interview 80601 discussed their experience with another group after the interview while they were waiting for the van. The male from interview 80801 recounted at length and in similar detail his story of the encounter with the alligators to a pair of grandparents who had brought their grandson to the take out point for a swim. For some then, the meaning of the experience seems to be the emergence of a story that can be relived and shared in the future. As one group responded when asked what the trip meant:

M: "What would you say [to his son]? What did the trip mean to you?" B: "I don't know. I'll be able to remember it." I: "Something you'll remember?" B: "Yeah." M: "That's probably why Mary and I did it." G: "We didn't remember it last time, but we remember it now." W: "They were just 4 and 2. And I think part of my reason for choosing this rather than going some other place canoeing was that we did it before and really enjoyed it and I didn't want to take a chance about some other place that we didn't know."

Closeness to Nature. A third experiential dimension relevant to the question of whether or not visitors to Juniper Prairie are getting a wilderness experience is suggested by one of the respondent's answers to the question asking him to describe the area to someone who had not visited before:

"I don't know, I'd just say it's worth the money and effort to get through if you like the outdoors. If you don't like the outdoors, don't do it." (male, interview 80802, 62-64)

For many visitors, the experience provided an opportunity to get close to nature in a very literal sense. Table 3 presents the experiential themes relevant to this dimension. The first theme, closely related to (and not entirely distinct from) the dimension of challenge was closeness with nature afforded by the tight, winding stream strewn with blown down trees, snags, and overhangs. Over two-thirds of the respondents directly elaborated on this aspect of the experience:

"... the first part of the trip there was an awful lot of overhangs. Which for the most part isn't bothersome, but all of the sudden we really even if we had an option it was awful and we had these branches flying back at us.... In fact, a lot of people were yelling. I heard them in the background. They were just too low. If you weren't really careful you could have raked it right over your face." (male, interview 72102, 27-35)

"We had to climb over trees and push the canoe underneath ... on more than one occasion." (male, interview 722101, 96)

B: "And all the trees fell down it seems like. They got in your way, you've got to go under them..." G: "He got hit in the head a couple of times with the log." (boy, girl, interview 72303, 108-111)

M: "Like I almost got rubbed off a couple of times. Look at my shoulders [showing brown steaks]. Owwww." I: "Yeah, I've noticed that some people come down here pretty marked up." M: "I'll tell you." (male, interview 80901, 133-137)

"Yeah, with kind of thick foliage. It's tight. You're really going through some tight spots. It makes you feel like you're right in wilderness. I mean you are pretty much." (female, interview 80902, 68-72)

The second most common theme, expressed by more than one-third of the respondent's interviewed (Table 3), related to the presence of alligators along the Run. In addition to a thrill, encountering "gators" under the close quarters of the Run gave rise to some feelings of discomfort

and trepidation.

M: "... a big gator." W: "Oh yeah, the thing just sat there like he owned the world. It was beautiful, but dangerous...." I: "So did ya'll stop and watch the gator...." W: "Not the gator, maybe the deer, but the gator, we took off." (male, female, interview 80602, 37-46)

M: "It seems like the animals are closer to you. They're not as scared as they are - we go to Shenandoah National Park and you rarely see anything because there are so many people in there all the time and the animals are real scared. At least the birds and the alligators, they never moved. So that made it a little bit different." W: "They just look at you." I: "Was that good or bad, the alligators not moving?" M: "Oh, I thought that was good." W: "I didn't want them to move. I just wanted it to stay right where it was." (male, female, interview 80802, 85-92)

In fact, given the "tightness" of the setting, even the thought of encountering alligators caused some trepidation.

M: "We didn't see any gators." I: "Was that a disappointment, were you sort of expecting -" M: "I thought we would see more wildlife." W: "When I saw how close the banks were, I was just as glad. That was like face to face with a gator. I wasn't ready for that." (male, female, interview 80604, 35-40)

I: "Did you see any alligators?" M: "Not an alligator.... It's just as well, we spilled our canoe one time and if they knew [his sons] there was alligators in there, there's no telling what my two would have done." (male, interview 1001, 50-57)

The possibility of encountering snakes were a similar concern for one respondent (Table 3).

Another opportunity to experience close contact with nature discussed by several respondents who had been among the first down was encounters with spiders and spider webs that appear across the Run after the last trip of the preceding day.

"Giant spiders. I've never seen giant spiders like that." W: "Oh yeah, the spiders." I: "Were they a positive or negative?" M: "Well there was no problem because we could see the web coming and usually we got most of them away. Or they were going over us and everyone went 'Urrrrrh.' A few screams, but other than that it was a lot of fun. It was very entertaining in that regard." (male, interview 72102, 44-51)

M: "And when you're first you get all the spider webs knocked down from the trail too." W: [Laugh]. "Yes." M: "So we learned that one too." (male, female, interview 80902, 56-59)

Other types of bugs were also encountered in close quarters and considered part of the wilderness experience.

M2: "All the bugs were exactly wilderness." M1: "Yeah, you need to bring" M2: "I had a big one" M1: "Yeah, I meant to bring some skin so soft." (2 males, interview 72201, 102-105)

"... you have to go under limbs, where limbs are sticking out. They could cut that off. [Then] they wouldn't have to go through it, you know, ants coming off limbs, and stuff like that, on you." (male, interview 72301, 82-84)

Thus, not only do visitors find a setting dominated by nature, many also found themselves in far more direct contact with nature than is typically found in opportunities provided by motorized nature trails or even many well-groomed hiking trails.

Decisions Not Faced in Everyday Environments. A final experiential dimension, already illustrated in the observation of the family whose canoes were separated during the trip, deals with decisions that are not faced in everyday environments. Although not as prevalent as the three previous experiential dimensions, this one was evident in some form in over 40% of the interviews (Table 4). The most common way this dimension was revealed in experiences was through the theme of wayfinding. Slightly more than 25% of the groups interviewed indicated that there were times when they were not certain what route to take. In one case this was a relatively minor issue, the best route to take through the obstacles. But in other cases, despite the presence of other users on the Run, some respondents briefly experienced the sensation of being lost, ultimately depending on their ability to read the current to find their way.

"... as I said, the only thing that I would suggest is that they have a cursory inspection every so often of the overhangs for the depth. Because sometimes you have two ways to go and you are not sure what is the best way to go. Sometimes we made the right decision and sometimes we didn't and then we wind up with an awful lot of overhang." (male, interview 72102, 187-190)

I: "Have you been down on a canoe trip before?" G: "Yes. We got lost." I: "This time?" G: "No last time." (girl, interview 72303, 6-10)

"And now that I've thought about it there's a couple of places where I wasn't certain where the trail was and I was able to follow it because the current was pretty good. But there may be days that people might have some trouble finding their way. Again you balance that with the natural scenario and I it was kind of a challenge trying to find it and I obviously found it eventually, but if ... depending on the skill level of the people coming out, there

could be some people get lost. I - you probably couldn't get lost too long back in there." (male, interview 80603, 105-108)

I: "Could you hear other folks on the river?" M: "No, not after we let them all get away from us." W: "It was like, are we going the right way? We're lost." [Both laugh] I: "So you weren't certain a couple of times where the...." W: "No we were just...." M: "Well you can't be certain, but if you watch where the water flows. W: "Yeah." M: "The water is all going to flow to the right spot, so if you follow the current you're going to end up where you belong." (male, female, interview 80604, 141-149)

As the second excerpt in particular illustrates, for some individuals this was a memorable and lasting part of the story from the experience.

A closely related theme was the absence of markers. In these cases, visitors were not so much lost in space, but were losing instead their sense of time.

"Maybe 1 or 2 markers, at least let you know where the half way mark is. I had no idea, we were going and going. But that was good, that was part of the experience." (male, interview 72202, 71-74)

M3: "It needs more markers, how far down you are." M1: "Yeah, because we don't like to bring watches, so maybe a time line. They tell us at the beginning maybe 4 hours ????? an hour to go." (2 males, interview 80905, 85-89)

The second most prevalent theme was a somewhat diverse collection of responses in which visitors were faced with the unknown. While the specific topics raised in the comments ranged from tannins (72203, 72303) to potential lightening (80801, 80803), they seemed to share in common a slight tone of apprehension or concern.

"What I noticed this time, you can see the water's got that kind of rust color. And we noticed that almost right away. And that concerns me a little bit although I don't know what it is. Do you?" (male, interview 72203, 33-37)

And for one individual these uncertainties of the trip led to one of the experience's broader meanings for him.

"Well, I got a lot more canoeing experience. And I realize I need to be a lot more prepared than I usually am when I go canoeing. We don't canoe really enough to have prepared like we should have. We should have prepared for rain and we should have prepared, you know, to tip over. And we should have prepared more for that. But that's what I learned today. Because we need to be more prepared when we take on something like this." (male, interview 80805, 93-99)

The final theme within this dimension was related to the previous in that visitors were expressing some concern, in this case about being alone. The first was from a respondent who had never been to a natural area before who found the fact that there were other people on the Run "comforting in a way" (male, interview 72303, 127). The second was an adult scout leader who seemed to want to avoid a solitude experience:

I: "Were there times when you were out there by yourself or did you feel...." M: "I was never in, I was not by myself. When I was by myself, I speeded up and I caught other canoers..." (male, interview 80606, 58-60)

Perceptions of the Setting (as Wilderness or Not)

This section attempts to characterize the ways in which the sample of visitors perceived the setting. Although this section includes some references to perceptions of social conditions, it emphasizes perceptions of the physical setting. A separate discussion concerning perceptions of the social conditions encountered is presented in the following section.

Summarizing perceptions of the setting turned out to be a more difficult task than originally anticipated. Although several questions in the interview guide (Appendix I) directly asked individuals to discuss the setting, especially in relation to the idea of wilderness, references to the setting were scattered throughout the interviews. Further, it was not always clear to what extent descriptions related to the nature of the experience versus the nature of the setting. For example, Table 5 indicates that only two respondents described the setting in terms of tranquility. However, other respondents described the experience as peaceful and relaxing. It is not clear whether these should be linked to the setting or not. Additionally, as Table 5 indicates, when offering responses related to characteristics consistent with wilderness, several respondents referred to the blow downs, overhangs, snags and other obstacles along the run. Some other respondents indicated that the presence of such obstacles are a positive and defining aspect of the experience, however these latter comments were not directly linked to wilderness, and as a result are not included in the table, although they might have

been. As a consequence, this section should be viewed as providing an indication of the way respondents perceived the setting in relation to wilderness based on questions most directly related to this issue rather than as a comprehensive or precise definition or description of the setting as held in the minds of the respondents.

Table 5 summarizes the nature of visitors' descriptions of setting characteristics they viewed as consistent with wilderness primarily in response to either the question asking them to describe the setting to someone who had not been there before or as an elaboration of the question asking them if they thought the area was, in fact, wilderness-like. The table is organized into two primary categories. The first primary category includes responses which were primarily descriptive in nature while the second primary category was more closely associated with characteristics of the area that seem consistent with wilderness.

As the first column of the descriptive category indicates, many respondents described the setting using metaphors related to, but different from the term "wilderness." The specific metaphors used to describe the place ranged from something natural, but foreign, seen previously only in movies like the African Queen to "real" or "true" Florida (Table 6). While metaphorical descriptions were the most common single response, the second most common response included statements concerning how natural or undisturbed the area seemed. Only one respondent initially described the area as wilderness, though a second referred to it as wild.

The second primary category in Table 5 reflects responses which describe characteristics seen as consistent with wilderness. Because many of the study participants had responded to the question asking them to describe what the experience was like in terms of wildlife and aesthetic qualities, which are consistent with the concept of wilderness, many respondents were not directly asked to list features of the area they thought were consistent with wilderness. As for the previous primary category, the responses summarized here primarily reflect either answers to the question asking

visitors to describe the area to someone who had not visited or an elaboration of the direct question about whether or not this area seemed like wilderness. As a consequence of these issues, the lack of emphasis on wildlife, plants, and other natural features in Table 5 should not be taken as an indication that respondents did not associate these characteristics of Juniper Prairie with wilderness. Rather, these aspects of the visit were addressed in the portion of the interview that dealt more directly with the nature of the experience.

The most common elaborations emphasized the absence or scarcity of other people during the experience. Closely related was a feeling of being out there or being nowhere. Also, one respondent who had never visited a natural area before specifically noted the absence of "people watching you the whole time" (male, interview 72303, 66). This same group also noted the lack of facilities. Several respondents mentioned the fact that downed trees, snags, overhangs, and other obstacles had been left in place was also consistent with wilderness or the degree of naturalness of the place. Other aspects specifically mentioned as being consistent with wilderness were the presence of obnoxious insects, presence of animals, and tranquility/serenity.

Table 7 displays visitor responses when directly asked if Juniper Prairie seemed like wilderness. The vast majority of groups interviewed (73.3%) indicated that it definitely seemed like wilderness to them. The remaining respondents indicated that the area seemed like wilderness, however, they qualified their responses in some way. The most common qualification (13.3% of all interviews) were statements by visitors who noted that some of the overhangs (snags, etc.) had been cut and removed to allow for the passage of canoes. However, none of these respondents thought that this activity detracted noticeably from the wilderness experience. The following excerpt is typical of these comments:

"I don't see how it could be more wilderness. It was no indication that anybody had disturbed anything and it looks like, other than where the tight places they had cut off a few of the fallen trees and stuff so they could get through, it looked like the way it should have been forever." (male, interview 80804, 77-88)

Two other types of qualifications were in reference to the actual presence of others or traces of others having been there. With respect to the presence of others, two groups (80601, 80901) said it seemed like wilderness once they got beyond other canoes while a third group said it seemed like wilderness except for other people around. This latter group had attributed the fact they had seen little wildlife to the presence of noisy groups ahead. They had also passed and been passed by one particularly noisy, beer drinking group on several occasions and noted this had detracted from the enjoyment of their trip.

One group qualified their response by saying that they had seen a house in the area. Finally one individual qualified his response by saying:

"I was born in Ocala so I've pretty much known it's here all it's life time. But yes, it does. After you get older and start working." (male, interview 72201, 86-89).

Table 9 presents characteristics which respondents noted were inconsistent with wilderness. Responses are divided into two primary categories: unsolicited comments and responses to the question directly exploring the issue. For the unsolicited responses, litter was the most commonly mentioned inconsistent characteristic (56.7% of all groups interviewed). However, as indicated in the first column, the majority stressed the absence of litter, e.g.:

"Very clean, just a couple of pieces of trash. Hardly any at all." (male, interview 72101, 21-22)

"There wasn't much garbage as it was [the last time he had visited] - not as much garbage, you know, people throwing their trash out." (male, interview 80602, 48)

"And I'm glad to see they're not letting anybody take any disposable containers in. Because we did see a few, some trash along the way, but not a lot." (male, interview 80805, 81-82)

A final group indicated that they were distressed to see beer cans in there and rather than emphasizing the lack of litter, they emphasized the need to enforce the "no disposables" rule. In part this emphasis may reflect the fact that this was the group mentioned above that had encountered the obnoxious group drinking beer.

In other unsolicited comments, one individual noted a spot where he had heard some people playing music. And two other groups indicated that the presence of other people was inconsistent with wilderness. A final group suggested that the opening time of 9:00 may limit opportunities for groups to see wildlife and may concentrate users, detracting from a wilderness experience.

With respect to the direct question concerning inconsistent aspects, responses concerning litter were most common. However, as with the unsolicited comments, the emphasis was on the lack of litter. Five groups noted that a few structures (dock, house, pilings at one point) were present, however these were not a significant issue in their minds. In fact, two of those mentioning the dock said it was a good idea to have it there. One group mentioned it was very much like wilderness "other than people we ran into there," while a second group noted that evidence of places where others had gotten out and eaten was not consistent with wilderness. Finally, one individual mentioned his group had noticed that some of the trees had been cut so canoes could navigate the Run. However, he also indicated that this was not a problem, that it would not have been possible to canoe the Run if this had not been done.

In summary, this section should not be taken as a statistical summary or precise definition of the area as perceived in the minds of the respondents. Instead, it should be viewed as an overall picture or image of the area based on responses to questions most directly related to the question of wilderness. Overall, few initially describe the area in terms of wilderness. However, other closely related metaphors are frequently employed by visitors. No one responded negatively when asked if the area seemed like wilderness, few qualified their response, and in general the qualifications were obviously in reference to minor issues. With respect to characteristics inconsistent with wilderness, litter was commonly noted, but the emphasis was on the lack of litter. It seemed to stand out in people's minds due to its scarcity rather than prevalence. A number of groups recognized the cutting required to clear the overhangs, however this was not a significant issue in their minds and several

groups noted that the presence of obstacles made it seem like wilderness. With respect to social conditions, a number of groups (7, 23.3%) noted that the lack of people made it seem like wilderness while a few others noted that the presence of others was at least somewhat inconsistent with wilderness. This last issue will be explored in more detail in the following section.

Perception of Social Conditions

Before discussing visitors' perceptions of social conditions, several issues should be pointed out. First, as indicated in the interview guide (Appendix I), respondents were first asked general questions about the social conditions (what did you think about the other visitors you saw on the river today). This question was generally preceded or followed by a question about numbers of other canoes encountered. If responses suggested there was some sort of negative evaluation, the response was probed in more detail, but otherwise, respondent's were not asked directly if there were too many others. However, the question regarding whether anything detracted from their enjoyment of the place generally immediately followed the question about use level, thus this issue was still fresh on the respondent's mind. While this sequencing had the potential to bias responses in favor of complaints about use levels, the purpose of following this ordering of questions was to ensure that the issue of use levels was on the respondents' minds when evaluating the experience. As results presented below indicate, few respondents indicated that number of other users was a significant detractant from the experience.

A second issue which should be pointed out is that six of the interviews (20%) were with respondents who visited the area as part of large groups. Five of these six interviews were with groups visiting during the weekend. The groups included an extended family from the local area (total group 15-20 people, interviews 72301 and 72302), members of a Sierra club chapter (8 canoes and 1 kayak, interview 72304), an adult leader with a scout troop (11 canoes, 25 people, interview

80606), and a group of family and friends (6 canoes, interview 80703). The remaining large group interview was a church group contacted on a Thursday (total group 12 individuals, interview 72101). Additionally, two other interviews (80805 and 80905) were with individuals who had previously visited the area as part of school groups. Consequently, a little of 25% of the interviews were with respondents who were or had used the wilderness as members of large social groups.

Table 9 presents responses concerning numbers of other groups encountered. The second column presents estimates of the number of other canoes encountered. Several interview responses indicated that respondents were often part of a "pack" of canoes. This impression makes sense considering the narrow and winding nature of the initial portion of the run. As a consequence, percent of time in the presence of others would have been a more appropriate question than numbers encountered. When this became apparent during the interview process, subsequent interviews focused on percent of time with others. This latter form of quantitative response suggests that there was somewhat greater opportunity to find time alone on the weekdays (the respondent indicating he was alone only 20% of the time was with 2 other canoes and his entire response suggests the 20% referred to the amount of time he was not in contact with the other two canoes in his party). However, because interviews initially focused on number of canoes encountered, there is not sufficient data to adequately support this possible pattern in the sample.

The third column of Table 9 indicates interviews in which respondents indicated that they were able to experience times when they felt like they were alone on the Run. The following excerpts are representative of these responses:

"It wasn't like a lot of people all clumped together. It was all spaced out. And it was really quiet. So you didn't hear anybody. You felt like you were out there all by yourself." (girl, interview 72101, 107-111)

I: "Any other remarks about the number of users" M: "No, we were out there as if we were the only ones there." (male, interview 72202, 47-49)

I: "..... what stands out in your mind about your trip on the way down, what you

The former group also indicated there were too many people in general:

W4: "And here I just didn't expect to be surrounded by people all the way." (female, interview 72304, 152)

However, two her companions, who had previous experience with the Run and a sense of attachment to the area, suggested that was simply the nature of the place on summer weekends, that there are other times when one can visit for another type of experience.

W1: "Too many people, yeah. Although that's our problem for picking a weekend, that we just have to take it. (78-79) W2: "You remember, this is Saturday and Sunday." W4: "I guess you have to come on the week days." W1: "Even in the fall or winter. Heidi and I have been here when the weather was like 28 degrees.... And there were not many people on the river that day." (3 females, interview 72304, 153-160)

A second respondent, a local also with a strong sense of attachment and also visiting the area as part of a large group expressed a similar sentiment, although he emphasized appropriate behavior.

I: "Does that effect your experience at all, other people on the river?" M: "I, well it depends on what they act like. You know, we get some younger kids out there and they're out to have a good time, you know, screaming and yelling. And I'm not into that much." I: "How was it today?" M: "It wasn't bad." (60-63) M: "I mean as far as Florida goes this is about the best place to go. There are times when it gets real crowded. But as long as everybody acts ???, you don't have any problems or anything." (male, interview 72302, 60-64)

In addition to the negative reactions to social conditions, there were also positive reactions.

In fact the number of positive reactions outnumbered of negative reactions (Table 11). Overall, 12 groups (40%), including two also expressing negative impressions about social conditions, indicated that, to some extent social interactions were positive. Observing others (primarily those who capsized) seemed to add to the story the experience provided, e.g. :

I: "Any comments or thoughts about the other people you saw on the river today?" M: "Looks like everybody was having fun. Looked like they were really enjoying the ride." G1: "Most people we met had gotten, I guess we had been there about 5 minutes and we came around this corner and they had fallen out of the canoe twice." I: "Twice already, huh?" M: "Yeah, they were going for the record. They weren't sure what it was but they were going to take a stab at it anyway." (male, girl, interview 72101, 94-100)

A similar positive aspect of the experience for several groups was the assistance parties offered each other when capsized or stuck in a tight spots.

"Well today there were 2 boatfulls of us, 3 I should say, all within a quarter of a mile of each other. But that didn't ruin it or anything because they were having the same kind of experience. We helped each other get out through some of those hard areas." (male, interview 72203, 60-62)

Additionally, one novice canoer felt that having to maneuver around others in the tight spots added to the challenge, while a final respondent (the adult leader with the scout troop) simply thought crowds were fun.

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Figure 1. Old woman/young woman figure.

Table 1. Interviews conducted at Juniper Prairie during July and August, 1994.

Date	Day of Week	Number of Interviews
July		
21	Thursday	3
22	Friday	3
23	Saturday	4
August		
6	Saturday	6
7	Sunday	3
8	Monday	5
9	Tuesday	4
10	Wednesday	<u>2</u>
	Total	30
	Weekday Total	17
	Weekend Total	13

Table 2. Challenge as a dimension of the types of experiences the sample¹ of visitors interviewed at Juniper Prairie (July-August, 1994) received.

Theme Defined Meaning of the Experience		Theme Helped Make Experience a Good Story				Theme Was a Defining Characteristic of Experience		Role of Theme Unclear
Absolute Negative	Sense of Accomplishment	Negative/Positive	Tipping Over	Positive	Skill	Positive Attachment	Ambivalence	Misc.
72102 ^{2,3} 72302 ³ 80905	72103 72202 72304 ³ 80603	72101 72102 ³ 72304 ³ 80604	72303 80702 80703 81002	80605 80804 80805 80902	72201 80601	72302 ³ 72304 ³	72203 72301 80602 80802 80803 80901	80606 80701 80801 80903 81001
Percent of Groups								
10.0	13.3	13.3	13.3	13.3	6.7	6.7	20.0	16.7
Percent of Respondents								
8.8	11.8	11.8	11.8	11.8	5.9	5.9	17.6	14.7
20.6		41.2				23.5		14.7

¹Due to the nonrandom sample and small sample size (30 groups), results should be thought of in terms of representative types rather than as statistically generalizable results (see text for explanation).

²The third row presents interview identification numbers. Identification numbers are month/day/interview number on that day.

³Most of the interviews were done with several members of the group participating. In some cases perceptions between group members differed significantly. When this occurred, both responses were included in the analysis. As a result, total number of responses presented in the table (34) is different from number of interviews (30).

Table 3. Closeness to nature as a dimension of the types of experiences the sample of visitors interviewed at Juniper Prairie (July-August, 1994) received.

Overhangs	Alligators	Spiders	Bugs	Snakes
72101	72102	72101	72201	80902
72102	72303	72102	72301	
72103	72304	72303	72303	
72201	80601	80801	80902	
72202	80602	80802		
72301	80604	80902		
72302	80702			
72303	80801			
72304	80802			
80603	80804			
80604	81001			
80702				
80801				
80802				
80803				
80804				
80901				
80902				
80905				
81001				
81002				
Percent of Groups				
70.0	36.67	20.0	13.33	3.33

Table 4. Decisions not faced in everyday environments as a dimension of the types of experiences the sample of visitors interviewed at Juniper Prairie (July-August, 1994) received.

Way Finding	Markers	Facing the Unknown	Not Being Alone
72102	72101	72203	72303
72201	72202	72303	80606
72202	80603	80702	
72303	80905	80801	
80603		80803	
80604		80805	
80801			
80805			
Percent of Groups			
26.67	13.33	20.0	6.67

Table 5. Visitor descriptions of environmental characteristics at Juniper Prairie which are consistent with and relevant to the concept of wilderness, July-August, 1994,.

Descriptions				Characteristics Consistent With Wilderness							
Metaphors	Natural/ Undistrubed	Wilder- ness	Wild	Lack of people	Nowhere/ Out there	No one watching over you	Over- hangs	No facilities	Bugs	Animals	Tranquil
72102	72101	80902	72202	72203	80802	72303	72301	72303	72201 72303	80701 80804 72101	72202 81002 80602
72201	72103			80602	80805		80703				
80601	80602			80603	80905		80801				
80604	80603			80801							
80606	80605			80805							
80702	80801			80905							
80802	81001			81001							
80804	81002										
80805											
80901											

Table 6. Metaphors visitors used to describe Juniper Prairie, July-August, 1994.

"It reminded me of going down the African Queen somewhat. Just lush. It's my vision of what the Everglades or something like that would look like..." (male, interview 72102, 57-59)

[If I was going to describe this] "to a boy's camp? All right guys, let's play Tarzan. No, it's so tropical, you see a lot of trees, you see a lot of different shots." (male, interview 72201, 58-60)

"Florida, true plant Florida. And almost unspoiled, but not quite." (male, interview 80601, 97-98)

"This is woods." (female, interview 80604, 112)

"Oh, I think it's probably real Florida. We've heard that expression used again and again here, but it is real Florida." (male, interview 80606, 72-73)

M1: "I would say it was something like out of a movie, going down, not like the Nile"
M2: "It looks like the jungle, the pristine jungle." (2 males, interview 80702, 42-44)

"It was nice, it was like being in a tropical jungle." (female, interview 80802, 17).

"... I'd say edge of Everglades. That's what I call it, I mean all the grass you're going through, the sea of grass, you know. There's some saw grasses, everything the Everglades would have. That's the way I would put it." (male, interview 80804, 56-59)

"You really get a view of real Florida, the way Florida really is." (male, interview 80805, 15)

"I remember when we were here 10 years ago, I remembered it as like a jungle, like a tropical experience with the forest really closed in on you and it didn't disappoint me, it's the same, you know, as I remembered it." (female, interview 80901, 44)

Table 7. Classification of Juniper Prairie visitor responses to a question asking directly whether or not they perceived the area as wilderness, July-August, 1994.

Yes		Yes - Qualified				
Unqualified		Clearing overhangs	Presence of Others	Traces of Others	House	Personal
72101	80605	80603	80601	80603	80703	72201
72102	80606	80801	80901	80801		
72103	80701	80804	81002			
72202	80702	80903				
72203	80802					
72301	80803					
72302	80805					
72303	80902					
72304	80905					
80601	81001					
80602						
80604						

56. 100% 57. 100% 58. 100% 59. 100% 60. 100%

Unsolicited Responses					Responses to Direct Question						
Litter		People		Opening time	Litter	Structures			People		Clearing of Overhangs
Lack of	Presence	Music	Presence			Dock	House	Pilings	Presence	Traces	
72101 72102 72201 72203 72303 72302 80601 80602 80603 80605 80702 80802 80804 80805 80903 80905	81002	72302	80901 81002	80901	72201 80801 80803 80805 80901	80601 80702 80703	80804	80603	80605	80703	80803

Table 9. Respondents impressions about the numbers of other groups encountered during visit to Juniper Prairie, July-August, 1994.

Id number	Number	% of time	Experienced times they felt alone	Not a Problem	Noted lack of people in relation to wilderness	Mentioned People Inconsistent w/ Wilderness
72101 Weekday 1	6		Yes			
72102	4					
72103						
72201	2					
72202			Yes			
72203	2	60	Yes		Yes	
80801 Weekday 2	5-7		Yes		Yes	
80802	6-7			Yes		
80803			Yes			
80804	7-8			Yes		
80805	2-3	Mostly		Yes	Yes	
80901	6-7					Yes
80902	1		Yes			
80903	6-7	90-95	Yes	Yes		
80905	10	75		Yes	Yes	
81001		20			Yes	
80102		60-70				Yes
72301 Weekend 1			Yes			
72302	3-4 ¹					Yes
72303	4 In pack		Yes		Yes	
72304	Zillions					
80601 Weekend 2	9		Yes			
80602	2		Yes		Yes	
80603	3		Yes		Yes	
80604	4		Yes			
80605	6-8		Yes	Yes		Yes
80606	16 in pack ²					
80701		50	Yes			
80702	7 (10)	30-40				
80703		At end				Yes

¹Respondent came as part of a group with 15-20 members, response is for encounters not in his party.

²Respondent came as part scout troop with 11 canoes.

Table 11. Respondents expressing positive interactions with other groups encountered during visit at Juniper Prairie, July-August, 1994.

Id number	Number	% of time	Observing others	Assistance	Challenge	Crowds Fun
72101 Weekday 1	6		Tipping*			
72102	4		Talking*			
72103						
72201	2			Helping		
72202				Helped		
72203	2	60		Helping		
80801 Weekday 2	5-7					
80802	6-7					
80803						
80804	7-8					
80805	2-3	Mostly				
80901	6-7					
80902	1		Observing			
80903	6-7	90-95				
80905	10	75				
81001		20				
80102		60-70	Tipping			
72301 Weekend 1						
72302	3-4					
72303	4 In pack		Tipping	Helping		
72304	Zillions		Talking			
80601 Weekend 2	9					
80602	2					
80603	3				Pass	
80604	4					
80605	6-8					
80606	16 In pack			Helped		Fun
80701		50				
80702	7 (10)	30-40		Helping		
80703		At end				

Table 10. Respondents expressing negative interactions with other groups encountered during visit at Juniper Prairie, July-August, 1994.

Id number	Number	% of time	Behavior	Too Many	Wildlife	Weekends
80901 Weekday 2 80102	6-7	60-70	Yes	Yes	Yes	
72302 Weekend 1 72304	3-4 Zillions			Yes	Yes Yes	Yes Yes
80601 Weekend 2 80605	9 6-8		Yes		Yes	

APPENDIX I
INTERVIEW GUIDE

-
- 1.) Could you describe what your visit was like today?
 - 2.) How would you describe this place to a friend thinking about visiting?
 - 3.) Is there anything special about this place that you think makes it different from other natural places you have visited?
 - 4.) Do you think of this place as wilderness?

Probes (in appropriate order based on response):

What (are there any) characteristics are wilderness like?

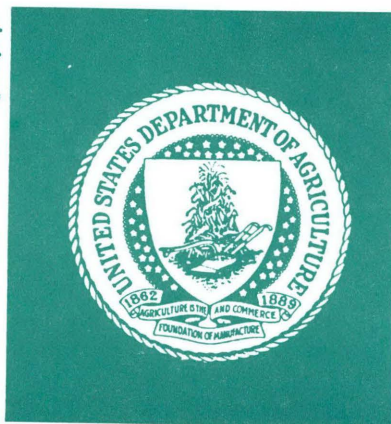
What (are there any) characteristics that are inconsistent with wilderness?

- 5.) What did you think about the other visitors you saw on the river today?
 - 6.) Was there anything about the visit that decreased your enjoyment of this place?
 - 7.) Was there anything in particular about the visit that increased your enjoyment of this place?
 - 8.) Do you have any thoughts about how the Forest Service should manage this place?
 - 9.) Could you tell me how you decided to visit Juniper Prairie today?
 - 10.) What was the meaning of this visit to you personally?
 - 11.) Are there any additional comments you would like to make about your visit?
-

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